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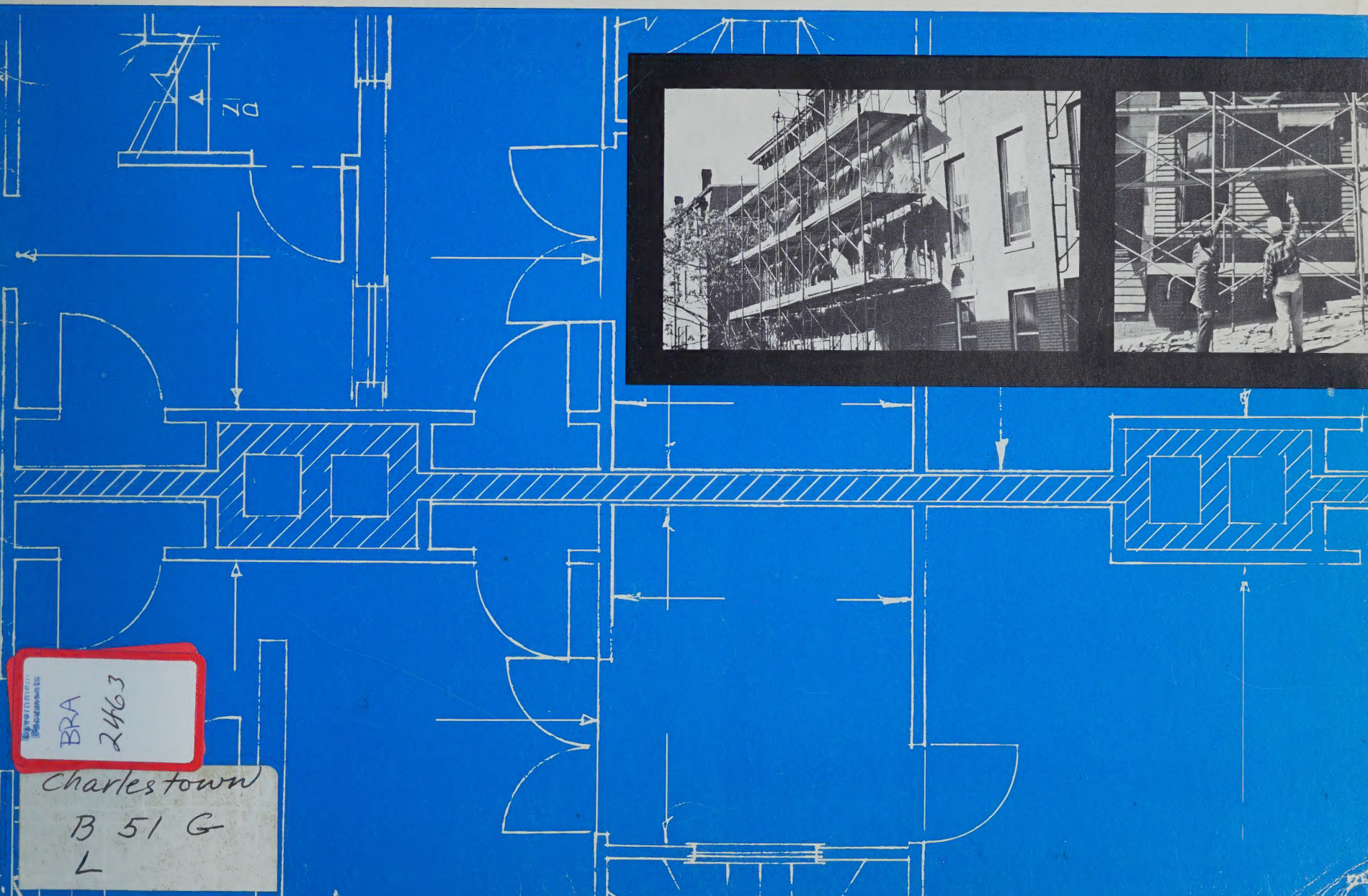
look what's happening in Charlestown...



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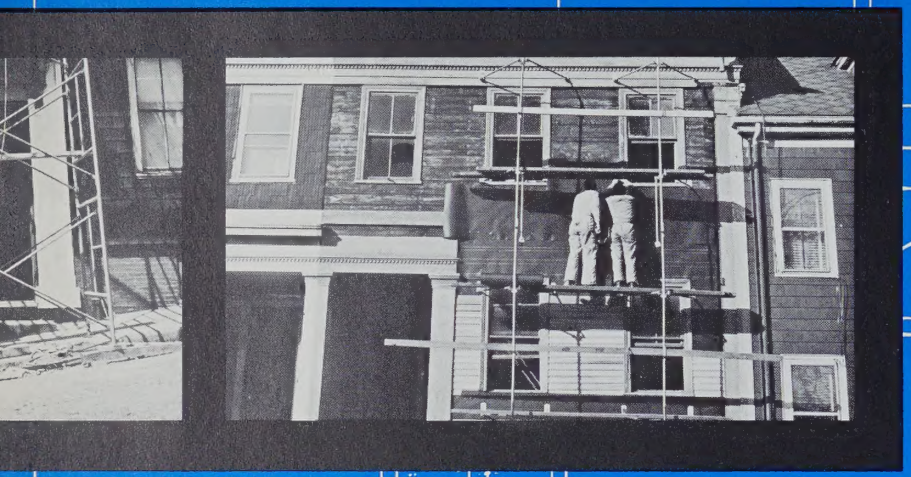
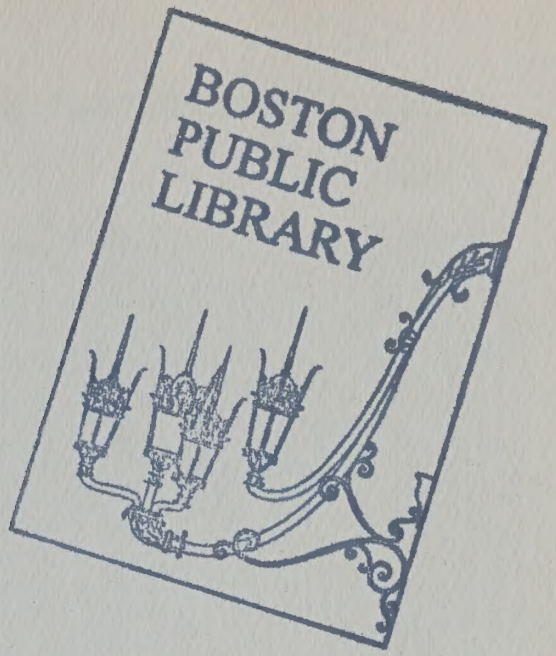


Just take a look and see what they're doing. You might find some ideas that fit neatly into your house and your pocketbook. And, you know, every penny you put into your house adds to its value should you ever want to sell it.



All of us have good reason to be proud of where we live. Charlestown is a famous place. Its sidewalks are paved with three and a half centuries of tradition. Our town is a landmark in history books as well as in Boston. People from all over the world visit us each year just to see our Bunker Hill Monument.

Today, the Monument isn't Charlestown's only attraction. Many of our houses are now something to see, too. They've been remodeled with charm and taste to say nothing of modern conveniences.

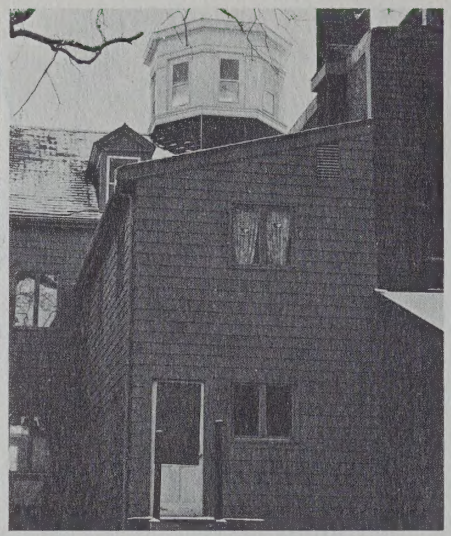
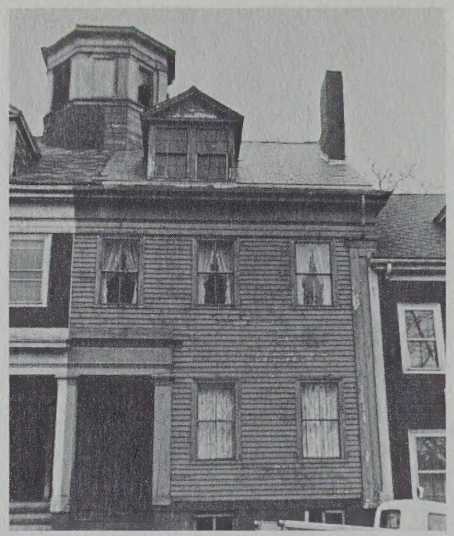
The same can be done to all the homes here. All it takes is imagination, help and money — a lot less than you think.

It doesn't cost an arm and a leg to get rid of the little traces of rot or to correct faulty wiring or loose pointing in the brickwork. You'd be astonished at how little a modern kitchen and bathroom would cost and how much they'd add to family life. And what about our heating systems? Some of them are so old they're not even safe.

And sometimes, if we're cramped for space, we accept it the way we do a toothache. Yet breaking down a partition between two small rooms might give us a bigger family room for everyone to enjoy. As for the front of the house, we may ignore it altogether. But putting a good front on the exterior of our homes with a touch of landscaping here and there might make all the difference between a house merely being a roof overhead and a house to be proud of.

Perhaps you didn't realize it, but ninety percent of our homes form the nucleus of the new Charlestown. They're worth saving because they can be fixed up. Some of your neighbors have already gotten the bug to remodel their places. And many are working with budgets no bigger than yours.

...we wouldn't be homeowners today if it weren't for urban renewal

Mrs. Walsh and her husband had always lived in Charlestown. And they always want to live in Charlestown — they both feel strongly about that.

But when it came to the roof over their heads, they were undecided. They knew the apartment they had was too cramped for them and their two teenage youngsters. But they couldn't agree on a house to buy. One place they looked at was too run down. Another was too high priced. Another wasn't located exactly where they wanted to live. They kept on house-hunting, but they didn't make a move.

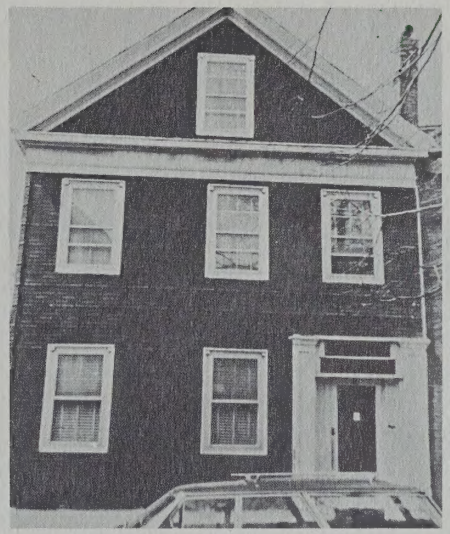
Mrs. Walsh says that the arrival of urban renewal in Charlestown and the low interest rate loans available for rehabilitation did it! It was just the spur they needed to buy the house at 4 Concord Street.

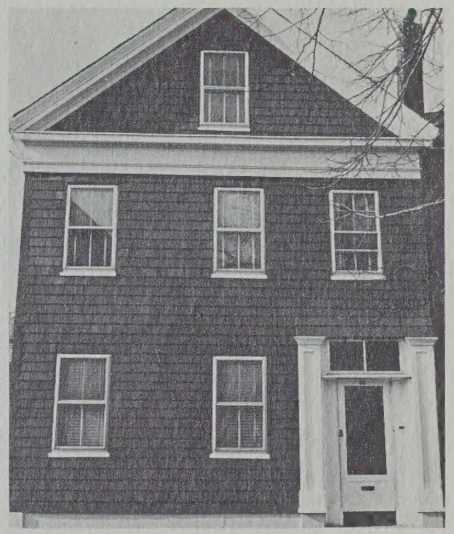
The Walshes are now in the process of rehabilitating this house top to bottom, inside out. Partitions are coming down to give the Walshes a larger dining room and a more spacious family room. And they're modernizing and enlarging the bathrooms and kitchen.

Mrs. Walsh is very appreciative of the assistance she and her husband have received from the people at the Center. The staff has worked closely with the Walshes on the plans, supervising, and arranging for the rehabilitation loan.

So happy is she, in fact, that she feels everyone living in an urban renewal area whose property requires rehabilitation or modernizing should take advantage of these "fantastically low" interest rate loans.

Putting up a good front in Charlestown...



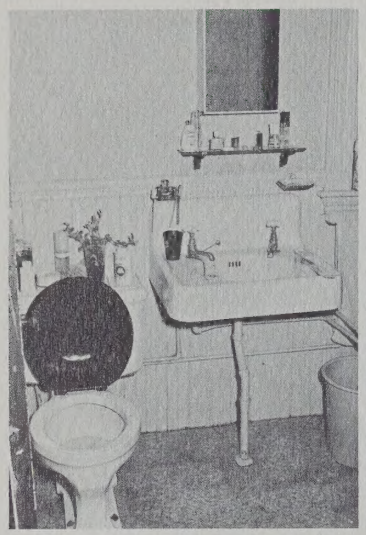
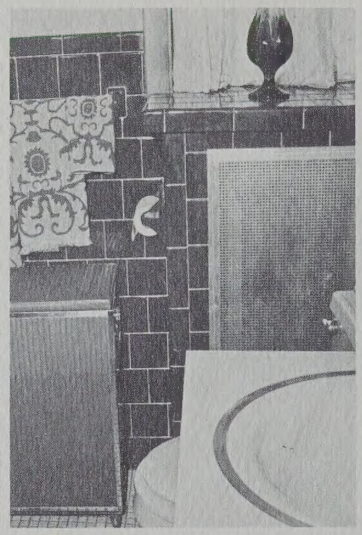
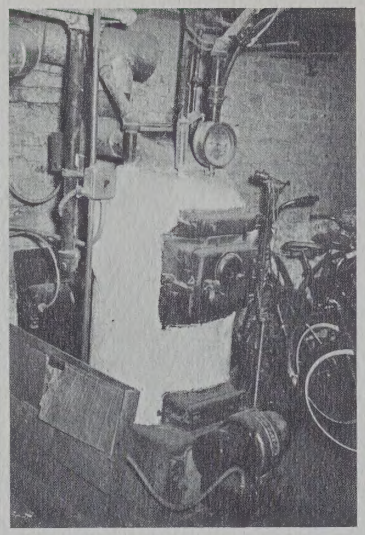
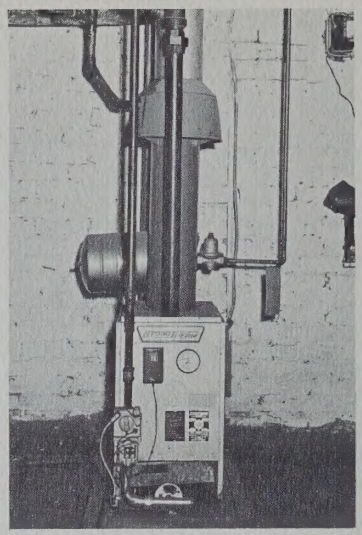


It wasn't just that the outside of the house didn't look as good as it could. The exterior was buckling and a draft was coming into the front room. But when you have seven children to bring up, it's not always easy to find the spare cash to make major repairs like that.

But thanks to the Home Improvement Center, the O'Connors were able to rehabilitate their home and not only that, to turn it into one of the most attractive places on Chestnut Street. New siding gave the house a brand new look. Nooks and crannies were sealed up so that now the front room is as warm as toast.

Mrs. O'Connor believes Charlestown is a better city today because of the BRA. And if the looks of her house are any indication, she's right.

...the BRA is doing good work here in Charlestown

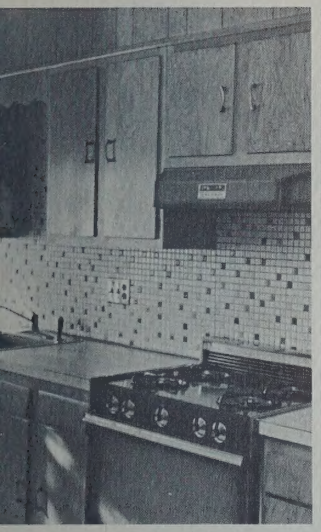
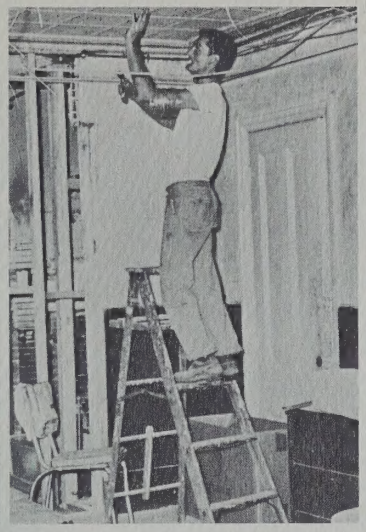
That's pretty much the sentiment of Mrs. Kearns on Prospect Street.

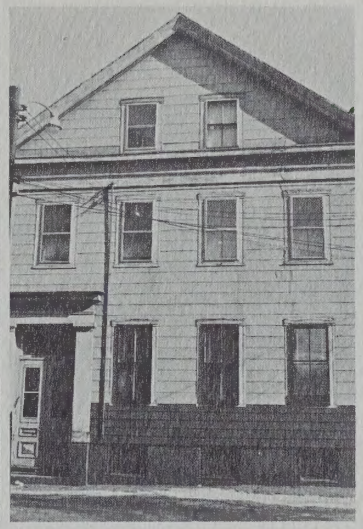
She ought to know. With the help of the BRA, she was able to modernize her bathroom and kitchen and to install a modern, efficient heating system. She claims that if it hadn't been for the BRA she couldn't have gotten the work done; her husband was hesitant about putting a lot of money into repairing their home.

As things stand now, she has an ultra-modern kitchen with a Gas range. She's enthusiastic about that, too. She says she wouldn't cook on any other kind nor would she dry her clothes in anything but a Gas dryer. As far as her Gas heating system is concerned, she is delightfully surprised that such a small, compact unit can provide the equivalent heat that her previous heating system did and at such a remarkably low cost.

She's lived in Charlestown all of her life and feels that with the help of the BRA the town is coming to life again. She describes urban renewal as a positive force in the community.

an article about the BRA inspired him



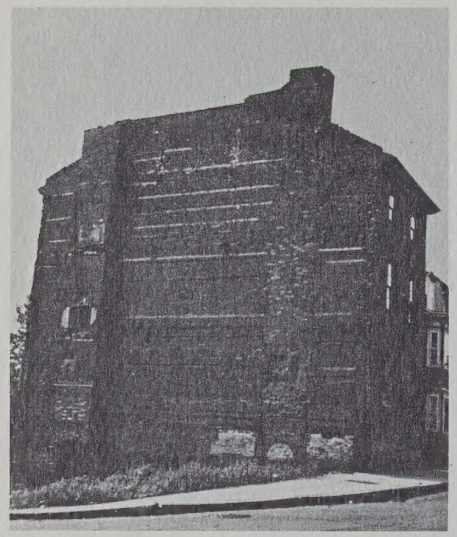
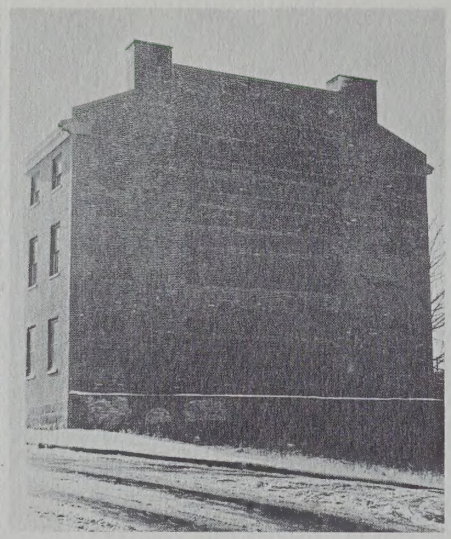
The deteriorated condition of Mr. Peters' house on Seminary Street left him with just two alternatives; either he had to sell the place or fix it up. It was impossible to go on living in the house as it was. But if he sold the house, he'd have a hard time finding another place for him and his six youngsters. On the other hand, if he fixed it up, he'd be hard pressed to pay the bill for all the work that had to be done.

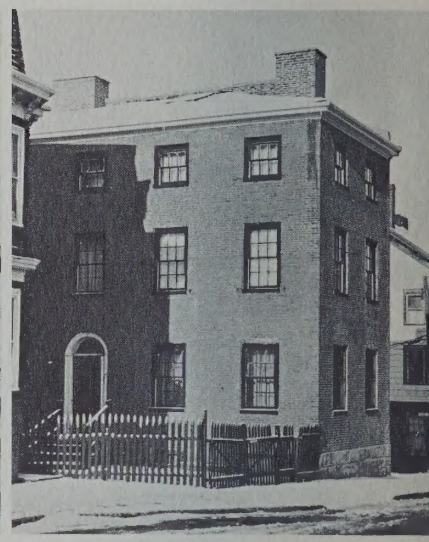
Then he saw an article in the Globe about the sort of work the BRA was doing in Charlestown. So he turned to the Home Improvement Center for help.

The men on the staff went through his house with him, drew up designs of the improvements he wanted to make, and helped him arrange a low interest rate loan to pay for the work. Mr. Peters says the BRA saved the day for him.

Today he and his children live in a freshly painted and papered home. Not only that, they have a spacious kitchen and dining area that was once separated by a cumbersome partition. And they enjoy the conveniences of modern appliances such as a shining new Gas range.

...a challenge and a chance to restore a classic house



The Stecks chose Charlestown as a place to live for two reasons: its potential as an attractive residential area and its proximity to the business district. Mr. Steck can walk to work.

For their home, they chose a Federal town house on High Street that was built around 1812 on the site of the fortification for the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Although they wanted to preserve the classic simplicity of the house, they had a big job ahead to make the place livable and safe. The house had to have a new roof. The bricks needed repointing. The garden required landscaping. The inside needed rehabilitating too. The kitchen area had to be modernized. So did the bathroom. The fireplace had to be restored. Woodwork, walls and ceilings were in need of repair. And, of course, it had to be painted.

When it came to getting the work done, the Stecks said they received "excellent assistance" from the Home Improvement Center in securing cost estimates, in obtaining bids, and in having the work inspected as it progressed. They were equally pleased with the low interest rate loan they got with the help of the Center; these loans, they felt, were a great incentive for other couples who might be interested in settling in Charlestown.

A word about the appliances in the Stecks' home: all the major ones are Gas. It's a natural choice for people who really want to live modern — even in an 1812 house!

Look at all the help you can get from the Home Improvement Center

Right here in your own backyard is all the assistance and advice you could ask for — at the BRA's Home Improvement Center. There, you'll find men and women who can answer your questions about construction, design, and financing. Not only that, these staff members can help you put together a home improvement program that suits your family's specific needs and your pocketbook.

The first and most basic service the Center offers is a home checkup, a roof to cellar examination to see that your house is safe and sound. The goal, of course, is proper maintenance to prevent deterioration of your property values and to maintain your family's health and safety.

To explain what other services the Center offers, let's say for the moment that you've decided to fix up your place, but you're not quite sure how to go about it. That's where the Home Improvement Center comes in. Just give them a call and a staff member will be happy to go through your house with you. The chances are, he can show you how to make better use of existing space, how to install more electrical outlets in strategic places, and where you might be able to fit in another bathroom — if you need it. Together, you and he will create your own program for improvement beginning with the most necessary jobs and ending with those changes which add to the attractiveness of your home and property. Just so you have a clear idea of how your place will look, a designer from the Center will make detailed sketches of what's to be done and how your home will look when it's finished. *The cost of all this help and advice — and the sketches — is nothing. They're yours for the asking!*

What's more, in addition to estimating costs, drawing plans, and working out a program that meets your budget, staff members can assist you in getting competitive bids for contractual work, in preparing applications for financing, and in supervising the work as it goes along. There's no charge for these services either.

When you're ready to go ahead with your plan, you'll find it a simple matter to get a low cost loan. You won't believe how reasonable the terms are! You may even be able to refinance your present mortgage so that your monthly payments are less.

Furthermore, when you improve existing conditions, the assessment valuation of your property won't be increased. You have the word of the Mayor on that score.

So you see, there's no need to deny yourself the satisfaction that comes from fixing up your place. And after all, we live in a part of Boston we can all be proud of. And with our homes looking as good as they could, we can be still prouder of Charlestown.

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We at Boston Gas are proud to be part of the work the BRA is accomplishing in Boston. For when it comes to the rehabilitation of their homes, most people choose modern Gas for house heat, for hot water, for cooking and for drying clothes. Small wonder. Gas is clean and dependable. Gas — like the BRA — is helping to make our city a better place in which to live.

Frank McDermott, Boston Gas
Project Coordinator, Urban Renewal
522-5600, Ext. 611

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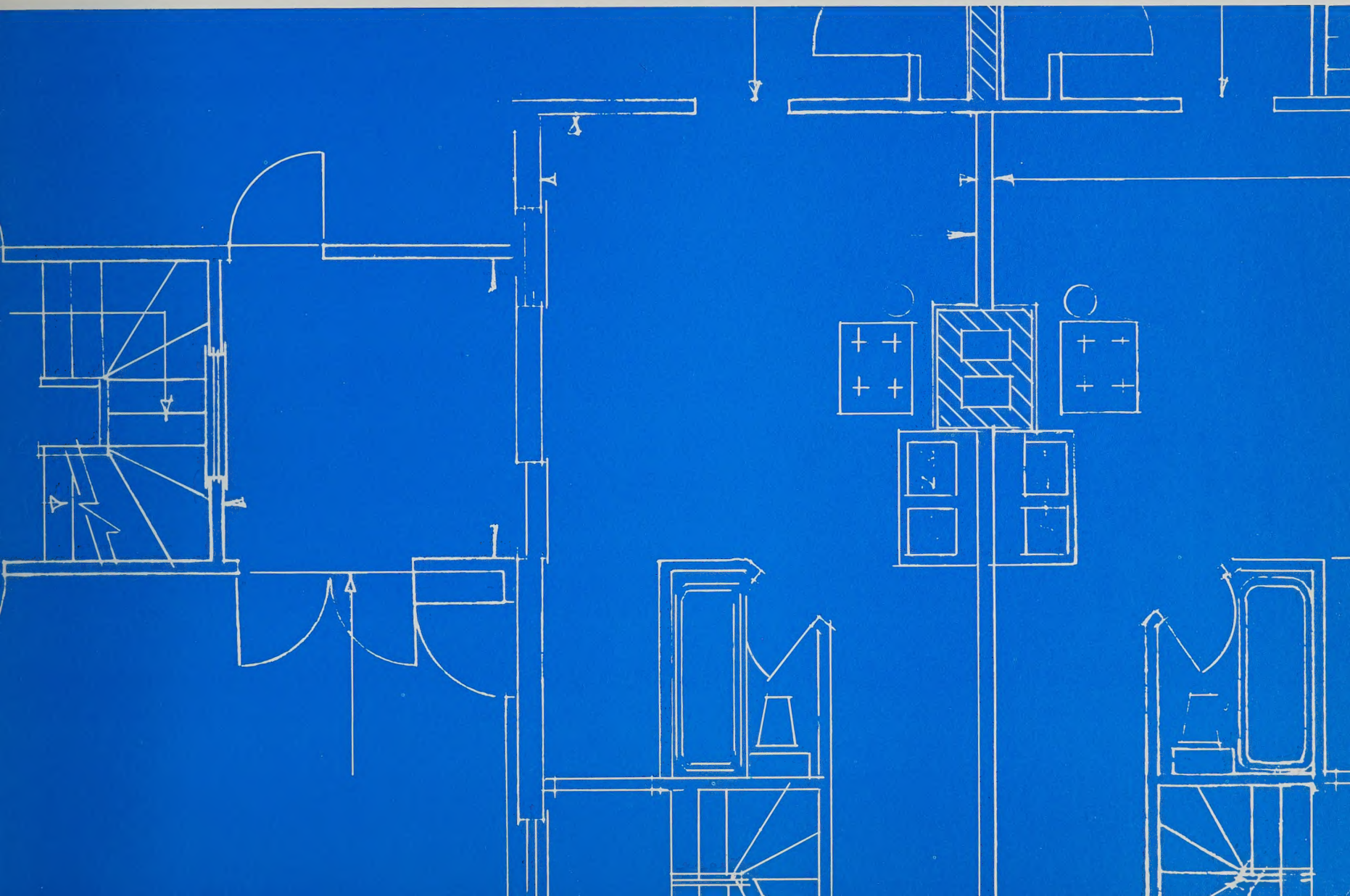

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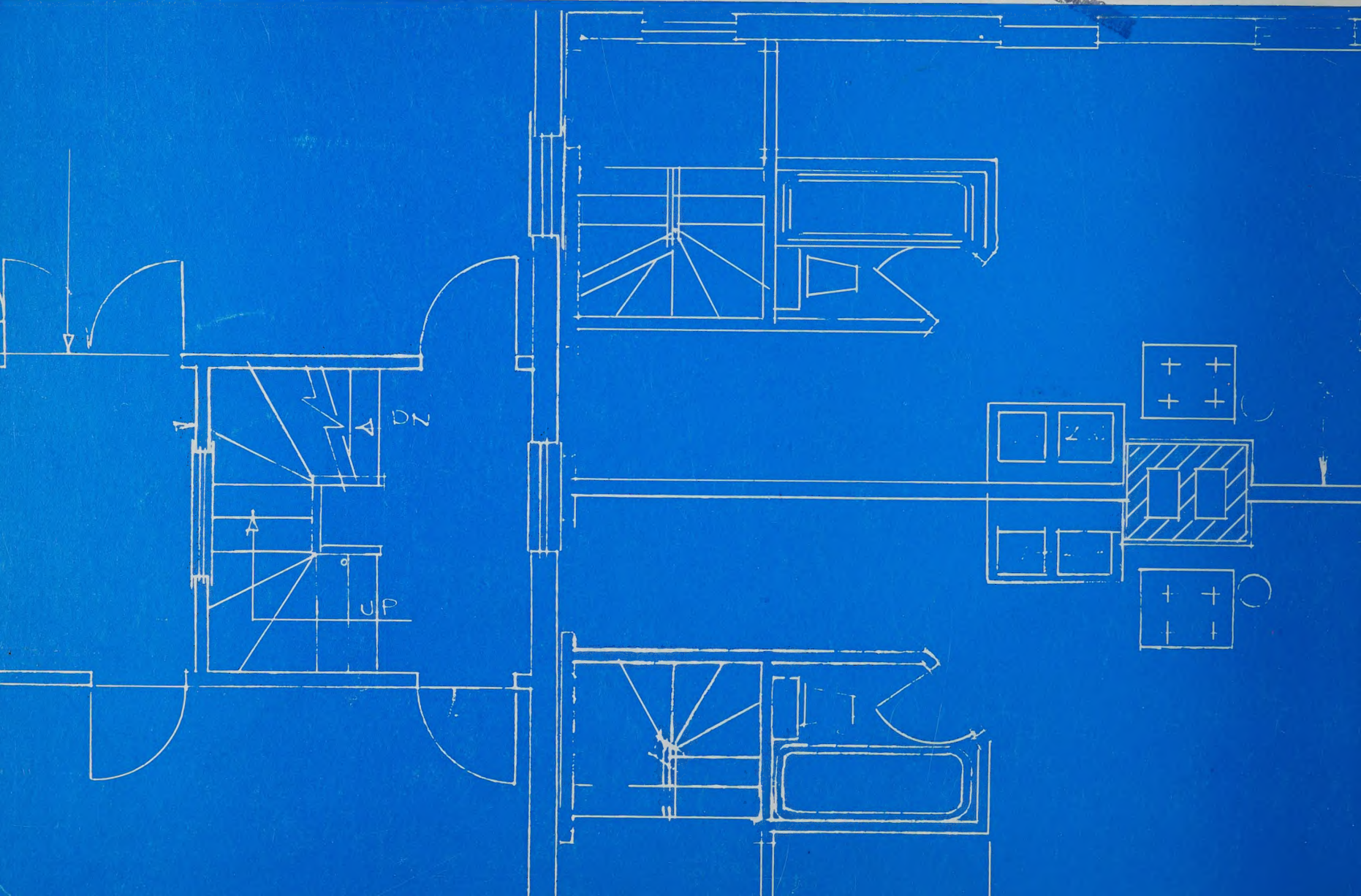
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